

# Ending Physical and Humiliating Punishment against Children: Ethiopia



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## Foreword

Violence against children in Ethiopia is too common and deep rooted in daily lives of the society at all levels. Most violence acts are deliberately committed against children in the hope that the actions shall bring about behaviour change. In other circumstances, violent acts are perpetrated as a way of expressing adults' anger and power over children. One of the many forms of violence against children is physical and humiliating punishment which is widely tolerated by the society and in some circumstances permitted by the law of the land.

Save the Children Sweden aims to promote the rights of the child as stipulated in the UN CRC, African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child and other international treaties as a tool for increased protection of children. It believes that a lot of the concerns associated with the practice of physical and humiliating punishment lies on the behaviour and attitudes of the society and lack of sufficient legal protection. All these need to be analyzed and understood before embarking on treating the concerns and the gaps. And, in order to have a better understanding of the magnitude of the problem, the causes and manifestation of the practice of physical and humiliating punishment, more systematically documented information is extremely essential.

Save the Children Sweden has seized the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children as an opportunity to seek relevant information that could increase insight and provoke interest on the deep rooted practice of physical and humiliating punishment of children in various countries including Ethiopia.

Africa Child Policy Forum with its rich experience on the subject joined Save the Children Sweden in producing the study report. The report reveals the origins of the practice of physical and humiliating punishment against children and also provides sufficient information on the consequences of the practice.

We hope that the report is received with great interest among academicians, practitioners, policy makers, parents, teachers and children too.

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## Executive summary

Even though the right of children to be protected from physical and humiliating punishment is one of the basic rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is widely violated in most countries, including Ethiopia. The African Child Policy Forum, in collaboration with Save the Children Sweden, carried out this study as a national input to the UN Study on Violence against Children and to national efforts on protecting children from violence.

The study aims to explore perceptions of physical and humiliating punishment of children, identifying the type, prevalence, magnitude, perpetrators, causes and effects of physical and humiliating punishment of children in the country. It also reviews the policy and legal framework, as well as other programme interventions, so as to identify gaps and/or good practices with regard to physical and humiliating punishment of children. The study sites were Addis Ababa and the four regional states of Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, and Southern Nations, Nationality and Peoples.

Generally, the study utilised primary and secondary data gathered from a range sources by adopting a methodological approach that allowed combined application and use of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Moreover, participatory research with children was the framework that guided the research structure and emerged as the study's unique feature. Children participated in different capacities, including as advisers, respondents (82%) and co-researchers.

Limitations on the study included: limited sample size due to time constraints; inadequate pre-testing; timing of data gathering and its clash with exams and exam breaks; incomplete or delayed response by some respondents relating to self-administered questionnaires; and insufficient time for high level participatory research with children.

Leaving aside the implementation aspect, analysis of the policy framework shows that the government has exhibited a clear commitment and determination to lay down the appropriate policy and legal foundations for the promotion of the general welfare of children in general and to protect them from physical and humiliating punishment in particular. Constitutional provisions dealing with protection of children from abuse, neglect and exploitation as well as the incorporation into national law of international human rights instruments ratified by Ethiopia, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, also help define the overall legal and policy framework. In addition, the 1957 Penal Code and the Revised Penal Code, the Civil Code and Revised Family Code, and school regulations enacted at federal and regional levels represent the enabling legislation for the implementation of the general principles laid down by the policy and overall legal framework.

These laws are, however, poorly implemented. Factors like inadequate commitment from and efforts by concerned bodies to translate laws into action, low reporting rates, and limited determination to investigate and prosecute reported cases all contribute to poor implementation of the laws and regulations in this area.

The study reveals that a large proportion of adults consider physical and humiliating punishments as acceptable ways to discipline a child, so long as they are not excessive. Punishment is seen as a primary mode of teaching children how to behave and is regarded as necessary for the child's own good. In principle, most teachers accept the abolition of corporal punishment in schools, but consider it to be too idealistic in the Ethiopian context. They even confess that they are still using it despite the official prohibition. The inability to see clear alternatives to corporal punishment and the perceived weaknesses of the alternatives in shaping the behaviour of children seem to contribute to the

endorsement of corporal and other forms of punishments as the primary mode of disciplining children.

Slightly differing opinions are expressed by children on the acceptable and unacceptable forms of physical and humiliating punishment. Most children state that any kinds of punishment, even of a milder nature, should not be exercised against them. Some, however, acknowledge that minor acts of punishment may be necessary, especially when the child becomes difficult to correct through advice and constructive dialogue. Moreover, unlike adults, most children are not positive about the efficacy of corporal and other forms of punishment. The majority (72%) responded that they learned nothing from such punishments. Likewise, children believe that psychological punishments such as subjecting them to insult and ridicule may be more severely damaging than the physical ones (in contrast to the opinion of adults on this issue).

Corporal punishment of children is a prevalent method of exerting discipline in the home, in schools and at the community level. Children face corporal punishment whenever they are alleged to have committed any fault or blunder. Wrongdoing or blame is usually determined by the adults who order or administer the punishment and in most cases action is taken without consulting children or hearing their side of the story.

The types of corporal punishment inflicted on children sometimes depend on – or bear no relation to – the gravity of the faults or wrongs committed as evaluated by the adults. Beating is the most common type of punishment. Instruments used include a stick, belt, plastic hose, rope, electric wire and others. Physical assaults using hands and feet are also prevalent. Methods include pinching, slapping, cuffing, hitting the head with a clenched fist and kicking the back. Some forms of corporal punishment follow a variety of elaborate procedures that usually prevent children from reacting against the punishment and that generally aim to administer an unforgettable lesson. These types of punishments are generally practised in the home and include tying and flogging, forced inhalation of burning chilli pepper, burning body parts using hot iron rods, and food denial.

The study identifies different groups of individuals that inflict violence on children. In the home, parents stand out as the principal perpetrators of physical and humiliating violence. Nonetheless, children believe that the punishment administered by their mothers is milder compared to that meted out by their fathers. Oddly enough, forcing children to inhale the smoke of burning chilli peppers is more often practised by mothers. Children who have older brothers have noted that they experience physical and humiliating abuse by them. As a result, these children are even more respectful – and submissive – towards their older siblings than their parents. It is also noted that children living with stepfathers or stepmothers suffer most as they may be severely beaten or psychologically rebuked by them. Similarly, children from extended families or distant relatives suffer relatively more abuse, both physical and humiliating. Domestic workers are another highly vulnerable group of children.

Teachers used to be the outstanding perpetrators of physical and humiliating violence in schools. However, they have reduced their tendency to abuse children physically and psychologically. Reasons for this include promotion and enforcement of school administration regulations. The other groups that perpetrate violence in school compounds are grown up (and hooligan) boys, classroom monitors, and guards.

Girls and boys frequently endure beatings, insults and various forms of harassment by hooligan boys in the neighbourhood. The police also inflict physical violence against children. They frequently abuse children who are engaged in informal street trading and they sometimes carry out mass arrests or beatings of street children.

The study reveals that major causes for the use and prevalence of corporal punishment in the study sites include: attitudes that give lower value to the views, best interests and dignity of children; lack of awareness about children's rights and alternative ways of keeping discipline; poverty and its associated effects such as high rates of illiteracy and

unemployment; large family sizes and numbers of children per class; law enforcement problems; and irresponsible parenting.

Direct consequences of the prevailing physical and humiliating punishment of children include permanent bodily injury and death as well as the negative emotions of unhappiness, humiliation, low self-esteem and hopelessness. Other serious consequences named by respondents include dropping out of school, lack of interest in schoolwork, low retention and achievement rates in schools, streetism and prostitution, and the effect of all these on the future of the nation.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations use various forms of interventions to address the problem of violence against children. These include programmes and projects on awareness raising, data collection and research, initiating and supporting children's organizations in schools, initiating and building capacity of child protection units within the police force, caring and supporting victims, and provision of legal assistance services.

In conclusion, the study recommends wider awareness creation, effective enforcement of existing laws, the introduction of mechanisms for effective reporting of violence, systematic data collection, provision of support to victims, enhancement of child participation, and legal reforms.

# I. Introduction

## I.1. Background

As the members of society least able to protect themselves, children are vulnerable to violence. Physical and humiliating punishment is the most common and widespread type of violence against children in most societies. Children are physically punished and psychologically humiliated and degraded at home, in schools and in the community at large. There is mounting evidence that physical and humiliating punishment has been endangering children's survival and development.

Historically, corporal punishment has been a reflection of or associated with authoritarianism and unequal power relationships in which the powerful use it to ensure the obedience of the weaker.<sup>1</sup> Children, as the most powerless segment of society, have suffered the most from this kind of violence. Corporal and other forms of punishment are predicated on the idea that some social groups are not capable of critical thinking and self-discipline and must be controlled through punishment. Indeed, physical and humiliating punishment is usually administered to children on the pretext of discipline – instilling socially desirable behaviour in them. In most societies around the globe, punishment is mistakenly equated with discipline.<sup>2</sup> However, punishment is the least satisfactory means of discipline and has serious adverse effects on the survival and development of children as well as on building a healthy and prosperous society.

The right of children to be protected from physical and humiliating punishment is one of the basic rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite this recognition, physical and humiliating punishment is a widespread phenomenon in most countries of the world, particularly in most developing countries. It is for this reason that it is an important aspect of the UN Study on Violence against Children.

Physical and humiliating punishment of children is very common in Ethiopia. It enjoys social acceptance as a way of disciplining children and is also sanctioned by various cultures and institutions. Although some studies on its nature and extent in Ethiopia have recently been carried out, adequate information is not yet available. The majority of the surveys on corporal and humiliating punishment were conducted in specific and limited study sites and focus mainly on schools. Children's participation is neither sufficient nor complete in most of these studies. There is no comprehensive study that adequately portrays the physical and humiliating punishment of children in Ethiopia, that covers most parts of the country and all settings and that is conducted with full participation of children. This is one reason why the African Child Policy Forum decided to carry out this study in collaboration with Save the Children Sweden. The study is also intended to serve as a national input to the UN Study on Violence against Children.

This study focuses on physical and humiliating punishment of children in the home, in schools and in the community. It attempts to examine the type, prevalence, magnitude, perpetrators, causes and effects of corporal and humiliating punishment of children in Ethiopia. It also considers the perceptions of the public and children towards the issue and assesses existing mechanisms for prevention as well as for the treatment and reintegration of victims of physical and humiliating punishment.

## 1.2. Objectives of the study

The study aims to generate information on the phenomenon of corporal and other inhuman and degrading punishments of children in Ethiopia, targeting Addis Ababa and the regional states of Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS). The study has the following specific objectives:

- Exploring and identifying the views and perceptions of children and the public relating to physical and humiliating punishment of children.
- Identifying the type, prevalence, magnitude, perpetrators, causes and effects of physical and humiliating punishment of children in Ethiopia.
- Reviewing the policy and legal framework as well as other programme interventions so as to identify gaps and/or good practices with regard to physical and humiliating punishment of children.

## 1.3. Working definition

This study uses the definition of physical and humiliating punishment adopted by Save the Children Alliance:

*Physical and humiliating punishment is the use of physical force or humiliating/degrading treatment causing some degree of pain or discomfort, in order to discipline, correct, control, change behaviour or in the belief of educating/bringing up the child. Physical punishment can take many forms, including hitting the child with a hand or other object, kicking, shaking or throwing the child, pinching or pulling the hair, caning or whipping. Psychological punishment takes various forms such as humiliation, making threats, neglect, degradation, demeaning treatment and ridicule. (Save the Children 2003a)*

In this study the term “corporal punishment” is also used interchangeably with “physical and humiliating punishment” as well as sometimes to emphasise the physical form.

## 2. Methodology and data collection techniques

### 2.1. Introduction

The study employs a methodological approach that allows combined application and use of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The aim is to ensure the validity of the study's findings through the use of various data sources, types and collection techniques, and in recognition of the nature of the research issue, its objectives and data requirements.

Study respondents were identified based on their status/role and relevance to the research. The identified respondents were categorised into research groups/ subgroups and studied separately in order to unearth facts from different perspectives and backgrounds. The table below (Table 1) shows the list of research groups studied, along with the data collection techniques employed.

Table 1: Research groups/subgroups and data collection techniques

Main group	Subgroup	Data collection technique
Children	Children at schools	- Structured interview
	Street children	- Focus group discussions
	Orphans	- Storytelling/narrative research
	Children at care centres	
	Children with disabilities	
Parents, teachers and community leaders	Parents	
	Teachers at state schools	
	Teachers at public schools	- Self-administered questionnaire - Focus group discussions
	Teachers at private schools	
	Community leaders	
Representatives of child focused organisations	Government	
	Community-based	- Self-administered questionnaire - Structured interview
	Others/NGOs	
Judicial and law enforcement officials		- Unstructured interview

Apart from the techniques/methods listed in Table 1, information for the study was compiled through literature searches and reviews and examination of official documents. The study utilised both primary and secondary data gathered from a variety of sources.

#### *Research sites, sample size and selection*

The research took place in the five regions selected for the study – Addis Ababa, Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and SNNPRS. Together these account for a significant proportion of the national population and represent the major socio-economic, racial, ethnic, religious and

demographic characteristics of the country. Table 2, below, summarises the research sites selected in these regions.

Table 2: Research sites

Region	Site	
	Urban	Rural
Addis Ababa	Gulele sub-city Arada sub-city Bole sub-city	
Oromia	Nazreth town Assella town	Rural communities adjacent to Nazreth and Assella towns
Amhara	Bahirdar town Debreberhan town	Rural communities adjacent to Bahirdar and Debreberhan towns
Tigray	Mekele town Adigrat town	Rural communities adjacent to Mekele and Adigrat towns
SNNPRS	Awassa town Dila town	Rural communities adjacent to Awassa and Dila towns

A sample selection of respondents was performed using a combination of stratified/purposeful and quota sampling techniques, using sex, age, level of education, status, role, type of community and organisation as selection criteria. The tables below (Tables 3 and 4) summarise the sample size targeted and reached for each research group/subgroup through the various research instruments/techniques discussed earlier.

Table 3: Children targeted and reached

Method	Sample targeted	Reached			Response rate/achievement
		Total	Male	Female	
Structured interview	1,150	1,223	635 (52%)	588 (48%)	106%
Focus group discussions	500	424	226 (53%)	198 (47%)	85%
Narrative/storytelling	100	226	115 (51%)	111 (49%)	226%
Totals	1,750	1,873 (82%)	976 (52%)	897 (48%)	107%

Table 4: Teachers, parents, CBO leaders, and representatives/officials of organisations targeted and reached.

Method	Sample targeted	Reached			Response rate/achievement
		Total	Male	Female	
Self-administered questionnaire interview	360	285	180 (63%)	105 (37%)	79%
Focus group discussions	200	148	101 (68%)	47 (32%)	74%
Unstructured interview	15	15	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	100%
Totals	575	448 (18%)	290 (65%)	158 (35%)	80%

The data presented in Tables 3 and 4 show, with a 99.8 percent aggregate response rate, that a total of 2,321 people participated as respondents. Of these, 1,873 (82 percent) were children and the remaining 448 (18 percent) were teachers, parents, CBO leaders and representatives or officials of various organisations. The proportion of male and female participants across all research groups was 54 percent (1,266) and 46 percent (1,055) respectively.

## 2.2. Data analysis

First, all close-ended questions contained in the structured interview and self-administered questionnaires were categorised and labelled. A unique numerical code for each response type presented with the close-ended questions was assigned for easy inputting and processing of responses in an SPSS environment. After entering all the collected data, statistical procedures such as frequency, sum and percent were used to analyse the data numerically. Responses/answers to open-ended questions or feedback collected through focus group discussions were manually examined, categorised and analysed according to their content. Following the processing/analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, the triangulation method was used to analyse the data.

## 2.3. Child participation in the research

Participatory research with children was the framework that guided the research structure. As a result, the research team worked to involve children at every stage of the research process. The degree and volume of child participation at every stage is what distinguishes this study from others.

More specifically, children participated in different capacities – as advisers, respondents and co-researchers. Their participation as advisers related to their involvement in the pre-testing of the research instruments, including questionnaires, FGD guidelines, storytelling checklists and identification of potential key respondents. The child participation aspect of the research was also markedly visible in relation to the involvement of children as respondents. The bulk of the information came from children of various age and social groups, as can be observed from the profile of respondents. Last but not least, children participated as co-researchers. Hence, they administered questionnaires and arranged and facilitated FGDs and storytelling sessions with children. Unfortunately, time constraints

that were beyond the control of the research team meant that the children had no opportunity to participate in the analysis of the data gathered. The national and regional consultations planned as part of the research plan may also be mentioned here to show the role of child participation at the core of the national and global study on violence against children.

## 2.4. Limitations

The major limitations on the research were:

### *A relatively limited sample size due to time constraints.*

All the research instruments used for collecting data from various research groups had to be used without adequate pre-testing owing to time constraints. Some meaningless responses were received that might be related to inadequate pre-testing (though these were insignificant overall).

Exams and school closures during the study period made it very difficult to collect the required data from teachers and students both quantitatively and qualitatively. This also caused some delay.

### *Lack of appreciation and interest and failure to respond in time was also noted among some respondents from child-focused institutions.*

Child participation was a major ingredient of the research approach. However, sufficient time was not given to ensure more active and meaningful child participation in the research. Participatory research with children requires more time and room for the use of innovative research methods. Time constraints and the emphasis on numbers limited the use of high-level participatory approaches and research methods involving children. Feedback was not provided to children on the findings of the research.

## 3. Review of policy and legal framework

### 3.1. National policies

Policy statements in a given field are very important for showing the government's political will and commitment as well as clarifying what underlying values should inform legislation in that area. The policy framework related to the protection of children from corporal and other forms of punishments can be drawn from the various policy documents issued by the government and the measures it is taking to address the problem.

The Developmental Social Welfare Policy of Ethiopia issued in 1996 is one of the relevant documents. This policy document emphatically states the measures the government needs to take to ensure children live in an environment that is best for their development. It contains focus areas stated in ten points that are aimed at ensuring children's welfare. It says, for example, that every effort must be made to implement all international and regional conventions and legal instruments concerning the rights of children to which Ethiopia has acceded. It also commits the government to ensuring that that all necessary efforts are made to eliminate harmful traditional practices with regard to child rearing. It expresses the government's resolve to make all possible efforts to protect children from abuse and neglect as well as to find appropriate and effective means of assisting children with physical and mental disabilities. It also declares the government's commitment to expand child development services and welfare organisations.

A review of other potentially relevant policy documents such as the National Education Policy and the Social Affairs Policy revealed that these had not directly addressed the physical and humiliating punishment of children. In particular, it is somewhat surprising that the Education Policy is silent on the issue of corporal punishment in schools.

Ethiopia's national plan of action for children for the period 2003-2010 and beyond, which was issued in June 2004, is another important document that shows the level of the government's commitment and its approach to the matter. Protection of children from abuse, exploitation and violence is one of the plan's four focus areas. The plan aims to protect children from all forms of violence, provide assistance to children in especially difficult circumstances and protect children from various harmful traditional practices. Physical and humiliating punishment, as a form of violence, is therefore an important focus area.

Leaving aside the implementation aspect, analysis of the above policy documents shows that the government has demonstrated a formal commitment and determination to lay down the appropriate policy and legal foundations for promoting the general welfare of children and to protect them from violence, including physical and humiliating punishment.

### 3.2. International instruments

Physical and humiliating punishment is a violation of children's fundamental human rights. The right of children to protection from physical and humiliating punishment is upheld by various international human rights agreements. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most pertinent international instrument.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child contains several provisions related to the protection of children from physical and humiliating punishment. Its general principles state that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3). The inherent right of every child to life, survival and development is also upheld and Article 19.1 protects the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any

other person who has the care of the child. Article 28.2 requires school discipline to be consistent with the child's human dignity. Article 37 protects children from torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment. Article 39 requires ratifying states to take steps to assist child victims of violence in their recovery and social reintegration.

From the above provisions, it is clear that the Convention on the Rights of the Child gives complete and wide-ranging protection to children from physical and humiliating punishment. Ethiopia ratified the convention in 1991 and is bound by all its provisions. Moreover, as per article 9(4) of the Ethiopian constitution, all the convention's provisions are considered an integral part of the law of the land. Other relevant international instruments to which Ethiopia is party include the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

### **3.3. Corporal and other forms of punishment under domestic legislation**

#### ***3.3.1 Corporal punishment in schools and care institutions***

The imposition of all forms of corporal and humiliating punishment on children in schools and care institutions has been legally prohibited in Ethiopia since the adoption of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution in 1995. Article 36 of the constitution states that "every child has the right to be free of corporal punishment or cruel and inhumane treatment in schools and other institutions responsible for the care of children".

The prohibition of corporal punishment in schools is further provided for in the school administration regulation issued by the ministry of education in 1998. Corporal punishment was not included in the list of acceptable disciplinary measures specified in the regulation and was thereby banned. However, the regulation does not state what measures should be taken against school personnel who violate the ban. It would be more complete and effective if it clearly specified penalties for breaches.

Most regional education bureaux also issued manuals or circulars that prohibited any form of corporal and emotional punishment against children. These documents make it a breach of disciplinary rules for a teacher to engage in any form of physical punishment and psychological abuse.

Article 548 of the 1957 Penal Code and article 576 of the Revised Penal Code (which has already been adopted by parliament and only awaits publication so it can take effect) impose criminal liability on any person who in any way maltreats or beats a child in his custody or charge. These provisions also apply to the personnel of schools and other institutions.

#### ***3.3.2 Judicial corporal punishment***

The 1957 Penal Code, which is still in force, specifies corporal punishment as one form of penalty applicable to young offenders. Accordingly, article 172 (1) provides that "where a young offender is contumacious the court may, if it considers corporal punishment is likely to secure his reform, order corporal punishment. Corporal punishment shall be inflicted only with a cane and the number of strokes shall not exceed twelve to be administered on the buttocks". However, the use of corporal punishment as a court sentence is excluded by the Revised Penal Code. Thus, judicial corporal punishment will be abolished in Ethiopia when the Revised Penal Code is officially published and officially comes into force.

### ***3.3.3 Corporal punishment in prisons***

Article 21 of the Ethiopian constitution states that “all persons held in custody and persons imprisoned upon conviction and sentencing have the right to treatments respecting their human dignity”. Based on this, it can be argued that corporal punishment in prisons is not allowed in Ethiopia since subjecting prisoners to corporal punishment would be contrary to respecting their human dignity.

The above article is further strengthened by a directive issued in June 1995 on the handling of prisoners in federal prisons. The directive applies to child prisoners aged 15 to 18 because the 1957 Penal Code and the Revised Penal Code both treat children in this age group as adults (except that they are exempt from the death penalty and are entitled to be kept separate from adult prisoners). The directive also tackles the issue of internal prison discipline, classifying disciplinary offences as light or serious and providing a list of measures or penalties to be applied in each case. This list includes warnings, suspensions of privileges, solitary confinement and fines. Since corporal punishment is not included it can therefore be said not to be recognised and allowed in Ethiopia.

### ***3.3.4 Corporal punishment of children within the family***

As mentioned above, the Ethiopian constitution clearly prohibits physical and humiliating punishment of children in schools and other institutions but is silent on punishments inflicted on children in the home. Moreover, an investigation of the 1957 Penal Code and the Revised Penal Code, the Revised Family Code and the Civil Code reveals that parents are allowed to use corporal punishment on their children as reasonable chastisement. For instance, article 576 of the Revised Penal Code reads as follows:

#### ***Article 576 – maltreatment of minors***

Whoever, having the custody or charge of a minor, ill-treats, neglects, over-tasks or beats him for any reason or in any manner, is punishable with simple imprisonment not exceeding three months. Where the crime causes grave injury to the health, well being, education or physical or psychological development of the minor, the punishment shall be, in addition to the deprivation of family rights of the criminal, simple imprisonment for not less than one month. The taking, by parents or other persons having similar responsibilities, of a disciplinary measure that does not contravene the law, for purposes of proper upbringing, is not subject to this provision.

Although subsection 3 uses the subtle term of disciplinary measure, what it actually envisages is physical and humiliating punishment. This is the clear inference from the exemption of parents from criminal liability for taking disciplinary measures other than physical or psychological punishment.

Similarly, the Revised Family Code (Article 258 (2)) empowers the guardian of a minor to take necessary disciplinary measures for the proper upbringing of the minor, while article 2039 of the Civil Code exempts a parent from civil liability for inflicting light bodily injury on his child.

Thus, the authorisation of “disciplinary measures” or “necessary disciplinary measures” or “light bodily punishment” by parents or guardians of a minor in the Revised Penal Code, Revised Family Code and Civil Code respectively is in direct conflict with Article 19.1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, the above-stated provisions of these codes not only subject children to so-called “light punishments” but may also facilitate the perpetration of more serious punishments by wrongly implying that parents are legally allowed to punish their children.

### 3.4. Practical implementation of existing laws and regulations

Analysis of the implementation of the policies, laws and regulations discussed above reveals that improvements remain sorely needed. For example, the government's commitments in its Developmental Social Welfare Policy of 1996 do not appear to have generated meaningful implementation strategies and actions. Some of the actions taken in response to the policies are not monitored regularly.

From the discussion of the relevant laws and regulations, it can be concluded that physical and humiliating punishment of children is prohibited in Ethiopia, with the exception of minor punishment by parents or guardians. In particular, corporal and emotional punishment of children in schools is expressly banned by the constitution and school regulations. Nevertheless, children still experience physical and humiliating punishment at school and severe punishments at home, even though corporal punishment of children in the home is prohibited (with the exception of light punishment).

Discussions with law enforcement officials, children, teachers and parents reveal that a variety of different factors combine to contribute to poor implementation of the laws and regulations in this area. Primary factors include: insufficient efforts and commitment from concerned bodies such as education bureaux and school administrations to translate laws and regulations into action; low rates of reporting illegal punishment to law enforcement officials due to the relationship the victim child has with the perpetrator and to awareness and cultural problems; and lack of commitment and attention from law enforcement officials to the investigation and prosecution of reported cases because of attitudinal and cultural reasons. During the study, officials in some police and prosecution offices openly stated their unwillingness to pursue cases of child corporal punishment in Ethiopia's cultural and historical context, particularly when the perpetrators were parents.

### 3.5. Areas requiring legal reform

The most important area that needs legal reform is corporal punishment of children in the home or within the family. As indicated above, the Ethiopian constitution is silent on corporal punishment of children by parents, while other subsidiary legislation goes further in legitimising its use by parents or other persons with similar responsibilities. Such legislation should be amended so as to ban all forms of physical and humiliating punishment of children in the home.

It would also be a step forward if the 1998 school regulation was amended to contain clear measures or penalties to be taken against teachers and other school personnel who administer corporal or emotional punishment in contravention of the regulation. This would make the regulation more complete and increase its effectiveness.

Another area requiring legal reform is the reporting of corporal punishment cases to the authorities. In order to ensure the effective implementation of laws prohibiting corporal punishment of children, some countries have laws that require professionals and encourage private citizens to report cases of child abuse to the authorities. Enacting legislation of this kind in Ethiopia would contribute to the effective implementation of laws against corporal punishment.

The fact that Ethiopia has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child could serve as the basis for advocating for the above legal reforms. Moreover, article 18 of the Ethiopian constitution, which states that "everyone has the right to protection against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment", could be used to advance the argument in favour of a ban on corporal punishment in the home. The government's formal commitment to protect children from all forms of violence expressed in the Developmental Social Welfare Policy

and the National Plan of Action for Children is also beneficial when it comes to lobbying the legislature to enact the above reforms.

## 4. Perceptions of physical and humiliating punishment

### 4.1. Introduction

Most studies indicate that conceptual understanding and perceptions of physical and humiliating violence against children usually vary between cultures or societies.<sup>3</sup> Issues like acceptable or unacceptable forms of punishment – and more significantly the degree of seriousness attached to a particular kind of punishment against children – are inevitably influenced by the values prevailing in a given society. Therefore, assessing how the public in Ethiopia perceives physical and humiliating punishment is an important starting point for analysing the problem. Among other things, it would have practical importance in indicating the kind of programme interventions required to address the problem since some of the causes of the problem may relate to public perceptions.

### 4.2. Adults' perceptions of physical and humiliating punishment

Many adults consider physical and humiliating punishments as acceptable ways to discipline a child, so long as they are not excessive. From the focus group discussions, light punishments like caning, pinching, scolding, glaring, shouting and so forth are in most communities considered not only acceptable but are also seen as a parental right to ensure the upbringing of a child with good manners. However, almost all adults contacted were against serious beatings and excessive punishments that result in physical injury, such as burning a child or forcing it to inhale the smoke from peppers.

Punishment is seen as a primary mode of teaching children how to behave and is regarded as necessary for the child's own good. It is believed that beating and yelling, unlike advice and discussion, send clear messages to the child as to what is expected of it. The reaction of parents and teachers to the current drive in Ethiopia to scrap corporal punishment in schools highlights the prevailing public perception that corporal and other punishments are normal and effective means of disciplining children. In recent years, the ministries of education and education bureaux in most regions have officially prohibited corporal and other forms of punishment in school. During focus group discussions, most adults expressed scepticism, or resignation at best and resentment at worst, towards the official prohibition.

Most teachers accept in principle the abolition of corporal punishment in schools, but consider it to be too idealistic in the Ethiopian context. They cite the difficulties of evaluating each student's background and treating him or her accordingly because of large class sizes, lack of sufficient guidance and professional counsellors to deal with behavioural problems, and other similar factors as obstacles that stand in the way of alternative modes of discipline. They therefore view the complete abolition of corporal punishment in schools as unwise in the absence of the necessary conditions. They are also unsure of the alternatives to corporal punishment – and their effectiveness. As a result, the teachers (including some school principals) concluded that some minor forms of corporal punishment remained necessary in schools and even confessed that they were still using them despite the official ban.

In fact, the inability to see clear alternatives to corporal and other forms of punishment and the perceived weaknesses of the alternatives in shaping children's behaviour seem to contribute to the endorsement of corporal and other forms of punishments as the primary mode of disciplining children. In the self-administered questionnaire, only 50.6% of adults believed that the punishment they administered had helped them to correct the punished children.

From the focus group discussions, it was clear that some adults do not accept the idea of abolishing corporal punishment even in principle and expressed their frustration and resentment at children's rights rhetoric and the effort to do away with corporal and other forms of punishment. The view of this group is encapsulated in the following statement by a teacher:

*"I will not physically harm him to the extent of disabling him. However, I will beat or scold him within the limit. It is imperative that children are punished. I will continue with it. All the conditions necessary to abolish corporal punishment are non-existent in this country. Currently there is much emphasis on the rights of children, but they are not aware of their responsibilities. They are spoiling their future. I am where I am today because I was punished and taught good manners as a child. Punishment is for children's own good."*

Regional education bureau officials also confirmed the existence of a strong belief among teachers and parents that corporal punishment is a good way to discipline children. They also reiterated the considerable resistance that has been displayed by teachers and parents to the rule prohibiting corporal and emotional punishments in schools.

*"The teachers felt bad about the rule against punishment in schools. They said that this amounts to saying that teachers should simply watch schoolboys and girls get spoiled. There has been a strong belief that corporal punishment is a good way of disciplining children and properly guiding their conduct."* Deputy head, Tigray Bureau of Education

*"During the meetings of parent/teacher partnerships and other forums, many parents complain that these days their children do not learn discipline in schools because teachers are becoming reluctant to punish them. Parents are putting pressure on the teachers to use corporal and other forms of punishment."* Primary education expert, Amhara Bureau of Education

It is also important to note that some teachers and parents in the focus group discussions vehemently argued against corporal and other forms of punishment, even minor ones. According to them, showing love, giving advice and discussing problems with children are more effective ways of teaching good manners than punishment. However, it is only the minority that holds this opinion.

### **4.3. Children's perceptions of physical and humiliating punishment**

Slightly differing opinions exist among children what are acceptable and unacceptable forms of physical and humiliating punishment. During focus group discussions, most children stated that adults should refrain from exercising even the mildest punishments against children.

*"Advising is the only appropriate measure to be taken against children."* 14-year-old girl

However, some did suggest that minor acts of punishment might be necessary, especially if a child became difficult to correct through advice and discussion. They said minor punishment was not a serious problem to them.

*"Pinching and minor beating with a stick is not violence at all."* 14-year-old street boy

Acceptance of milder forms of punishment out of a sense of realism or helplessness is also reflected by many children.

*“We accept pinching if we misbehave, since we are used to it. But we do not accept more than that.” 13-year-old girl*

For this girl, pinching was acceptable not because she believed in its importance, but because she was used to it.

Most children are not positive to corporal and other forms of punishment as an effective means of discipline. Of 1,121 children reached through structured interviews, 74.2% stated that they had not learned from the punishment they received in terms of teaching them not to commit the same error again. Thus there is a significant divergence of opinion between adults and children on the efficacy of punishment.

Concerning psychological punishment, many children stated in the focus group discussions that psychological punishments such as insults and ridicule could prove more damaging to children than physical ones. Some children even appear to prefer the former type if forced to choose. However, community members and parents considered psychological punishment to be less harmful to children than corporal punishment.

## 5. Type, prevalence and magnitude of violence against children

### 5.1. Physical punishment

#### 5.1.1 Type, prevalence and magnitude of corporal punishment in the home

##### Overview of the findings

Children widely and commonly experience corporal punishment in the home. Punishments range from simple forms to the most severe types.

- *“Slapping is common in our home. My mother also pinches me between my thighs. These are common practices in our neighbourhood.” 11-year-old girl.*
- *“I had been forced to inhale smoking pepper by my mother” 12-year-old boy.*
- *“I know a man who beat his step-daughter with hot iron” 11-year-old boy.*
- *“My father used to beat me by tying my neck between my legs.” 14-year-old student*

Corporal punishment of children is a prevalent practice used to administer discipline in the home. Out of the total respondent children, only 17 (1.4 percent) said they had never experienced any type of corporal punishment anywhere in their life.

Children are chastised at home whenever they are alleged to have committed any fault or blunder. Wrongdoing or blame is usually apportioned by the adults who order or administer the punishment, and in most cases action is taken without consulting the children or hearing their side of the story. Different types of corporal punishment are inflicted on children sometimes depending on and sometimes irrespective of the gravity of the faults or wrongs as weighed from the adults’ perspective. Beating is the most common form of punishment and instruments used include sticks, belts, plastic hose, rope, electric wire, etc. Physical assaults using the hands and feet, such as pinching, slapping, cuffing, hitting the head with a clenched fist and kicking the back, are also prevalent.

The results of the questionnaire given to children corroborate the above and show the proportion of children that have experienced hitting with a stick (74.1 percent), hitting the head (73.3 percent), slapping (70.3 percent), pinching (69.1 percent), whipping with a belt (63.7 percent), and being forced to kneel down (53.1 percent). (See Table 5.1, next page.)

Table 5.1 Responses of children on their experiences of corporal punishment at home

	Type of punishment	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1	Hitting with a stick	18.9%	55.2%	26.0%
2	Hitting with a plastic tube or electric wire	7.4%	30.0%	62.6%
3	Whipping with a belt	16.5%	47.2%	36.3%
4	Slapping	18.9%	51.4%	29.6%
5	Punching	9.5%	26.6%	63.8%
6	Kicking	12.2%	40.9%	46.8%
7	Hitting the head	21.2%	52.1%	26.6%
8	Pinching	18.9%	50.2%	30.9%
9	Kneeling down	15.4%	34.3%	50.3%
10	Tying with rope or electric wire	8.7%	21.1%	70.2%
11	Burning	6.6%	12.7%	80.6%
12	Forced inhalation of red pepper smoke	8.7%	22.2%	69.1%
13	Forced manual work	15.1%	28.1%	56.8%
14	Forced painful physical exercise	9.4%	18.1%	72.6%
15	Denial of food	12.7%	26.8%	60.5%
16	Twisting fingers with a pencil in between	8.6%	17.9%	73.5%

The reactions obtained from parents, community leaders and teachers on the particular issue also reinforced the response acknowledged by children. As per their experience, these respondents mentioned hitting with a stick, whipping with a belt, slapping, hitting the head, punching and kicking as the most widespread forms of corporal punishment exercised against children. (See Table 5.2 – Chapter 5 annex.)

There are also less frequent but harsh forms of corporal punishment administered to teach children unforgettable lessons. These usually follow a variety of elaborate procedures that incapacitate children to prevent them from reacting to the punishment. These include:

- Tying and flogging. Children’s hands are twisted and tied behind with rope, they are ordered to kneel down with some objects stuffed into their mouth, and then they are forced to stay in that position or are flogged many times on the back.
- Inhaling smoking pepper. Children are forced to inhale the smoke of burning red pepper, again tied from behind and kneeling down covered with something so that they inhale concentrated smoke. Coughing and suffocation naturally follows.
- Burning. Fire or a hot iron is used to burn bodily parts of children, usually the hands.
- Denial of food. Parents throw children out of the home and/or deny them meals.
- However, such kinds of harsh punishments are by and large imposed on children who have committed serious wrongs (such as theft) in the eyes of the parents or other family members and, hence, are not the more frequent types.

## 5.1.2 Type, prevalence and magnitude of corporal punishment in school

### Overview of the findings

Corporal punishment is still practised in schools regardless of legislation banning its use. The types and frequency of the violent acts committed against children are similarly wide-ranging to those meted out in the home.

*“A teacher has beaten me with his belt saying that I had conversation with my friend in the classroom.” 14-year-old boy*

*“My friend and I were talking in class. Our class monitor accused us of improperly conversing and gave our names to the school authorities. We also petitioned against him for falsely accusing us. Anyway, we apologised in front of the school director for a fault we did not commit and signed a document that we would not disturb again. Since the class monitor was not happy with our petition, he beats us now and then with no reason.” 14-year-old girl*

*“One day our teacher said that those who had not done their homework should come out in front. Unfortunately, I hadn’t done my homework on that particular day, so I went out. Then the teacher beat me with a stick. In the meanwhile, he knocked my head against the wall as a result of which my forehead was bruised.” 15-year-old girl*

*“Alleged to have talked with my friend, my teacher ordered me come out in front of the class. He knocked my head against the blackboard, kicked me heavily on my leg and I fell down.” 13-year-old boy*

Corporal punishment has not been totally abolished in schools. The corporal punishment of children in schools is prohibited by a constitutional provision. Education authorities have also passed enabling regulations. Yet, corporal punishment is still practised in schools. According to the responses of the children obtained through the questionnaires as well as the outcome of the focus group discussions, kneeling down (81.3 percent), hitting the head (77.8 percent), pinching (74.4 percent), slapping (72 percent), and hitting with a stick (60.8 percent) are the most widespread forms of punishment at school. Manual work, such as working on school farms or cleaning school compounds also exists in many of the schools contacted. (See Table 5.3, below)

Table 5.3 Responses of children on their experiences of corporal punishment in schools

	Type of punishment	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1	Hitting with a stick	12.3%	59.7%	28.0%
2	Hitting with plastic tube or electric wire	10.2%	30.7%	59.1%
3	Whipping with belt	9.4%	29.3%	61.3%
4	Slapping	13.2%	49.8%	37.0%
5	Punching	7.9%	32.1%	60.1%
6	Kicking	11.9%	44.0%	44.0%
7	Hitting the head	17.9%	59.9%	22.2%
8	Pinching	20.0%	54.4%	25.6%
9	Kneeling down	25.1%	56.2%	18.8%

10	Tying with rope or electric wire	4.4%	15.8%	79.9%
11	Forced manual work	6.6.1%	27.8%	65.5%
12	Forced painful physical exercise	8.6%	33.2%	58.2%
13	Twisting fingers with a pencil in between	10.0%	51.9%	38.2%

Parents, community leaders and teachers agree on the prevalence of corporal punishment in schools, acknowledging it to be a normal practice in schools (see Table 5.4 – Chapter 5 annex). On the other hand, most teachers who participated in the focus group discussions emphatically denied that teachers carried out corporal punishment, saying that if such punishments took place then they were practised by monitors and guards. Yet the responses and reactions from many children in a number of schools do not always tally with the teachers’ statements. During focus group discussions with students at different sites, the majority said slapping, blows to the head, pinching, and forced manual work were practised by some schoolteachers and tolerated by school authorities. The research team also come across some teachers carrying sticks when entering classes and moving inside the school compound.

It is true that these practices have been demonstrably minimised compared to previous years. It is also apparent that teacher accountability has increased, contributing to the decline in corporal punishment in schools. However, corporal punishment is still a controversial issue that is not wholeheartedly accepted by teachers and the education authorities. Most teachers said they believed simple punishments (like making children kneel down) should be administered because they do not result in serious injuries to the child. Some, including school principals, also said that tackling the prevalence of corporal punishment in the home and community should precede its abolition in schools.

Regarding the severity of punishments, certain types that are prevalent in the home (such as forcing children to inhale smoking/burning pepper and denial of food) are for obvious reasons non-existent in schools. Yet it is widely accepted that the intensity of manual work and beatings that are disproportionate to the fault or wrong committed by children may sometimes constitute harsh corporal punishment. In line with this, some children and community leaders pointed out cases in which teachers have inflicted serious bodily injuries.

### *5.1.3 Type, prevalence and magnitude of corporal punishment in the community*

#### **Overview of the findings**

Corporal punishment of children prevails at the community level. These punishments are usually simple and less frequent.

Different forms of corporal punishment are committed against children by community members outside the home and school environment. In the focus group discussions with students, parents and teachers it was indicated that adults shout at, beat and pinch children when they think the latter exhibit “bad” behaviour. Children are also victims of various forms of corporal punishment inflicted on them by older children. Older children may beat, punch, spit at and kick younger ones on the streets and in playgrounds. Many children experience this sort of violence in their neighbourhoods, though to differing degrees.

Nevertheless, corporal punishment is less prevalent in the community compared to in the home and in schools. The well-established culture of accepting the disciplining of children by neighbours and elders has perhaps contributed to the existence of physical violence against children in most study sites. All the same, the community’s responsibility

for disciplining its children has been taken less seriously over time and this seems to have reduced the occurrence of such practices.

It is common for children to come into frequent contact at the community level with other individuals or peers such as vagrants<sup>4</sup> and, sometimes, police officers who may physically abuse them. Slapping, blows to the head, kicking and striking with a stick are forms of treatment that are still exercised within the community. Nonetheless, the presence of such violent acts is, by and large, not as widespread as it is in schools and homes. (See Table 5.5, next page, and Table 5.6, Chapter 5 annex.)

Table 5.5 Responses of children on their experiences of corporal punishment in the community

	Type of punishment	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1	Hitting with a stick	13.2%	34.4%	52.4%
2	Hitting with a plastic tube or electric wire	7.1%	26.8%	66.0%
3	Whipping with a belt	9.9%	25.5%	64.6%
4	Slapping	13.1%	40.5%	46.3%
5	Punching	11.3%	36.3%	52.4%
6	Kicking	16.4%	35.7%	48.0%
7	Hitting the head	15.1%	38.6%	46.3%
8	Pinching	14.1%	35.1%	50.8%
9	Kneeling down	10.4%	25.5%	64.1%
10	Tying with a rope or electric wire	5.3%	16.7%	78.0%
11	Burning	4.0%	12.3%	83.7%
12	Forced manual work	7.5%	26.2%	66.3%
13	Forced painful physical exercise	6.7%	20.1%	73.3%
14	Twisting fingers with a pencil in between	5.6%	19.3%	75.1%

#### 5.1.4 Variation in the prevalence and magnitude of corporal punishment according to gender, region and vulnerability of the children

The questionnaires completed by children showed slight regional variation. Physical abuse appeared to be more prevalent in SNNPR but less prevalent in the Tigray region. At any rate, it would be unwarranted to speculate as to whether such elements as education, culture, historical background, religion, and so forth are possible reasons for the variation.

Table 5.7 Responses of children who sometimes experienced corporal punishment at home (by region)

Type of punishment	Addis Ababa	Oromia	Amhara	Tigray	SNNPR
Hitting with a stick	48.0%	53.8%	60.5%	44.8%	70.2%
Whipping with a belt	48.6%	48.9%	48.0%	39.2%	50.5%
Slapping	46.3%	56.5%	55.4%	38.3%	58.9%
Kicking	32.0%	45.7%	48.5%	31.9%	44.5%
Hitting the head	55.1%	52.3%	55.9%	41.8%	55.2%
Pinching	49.8%	52.0%	50.7%	42.5%	55.1%

Vulnerable children like those who inhabit the streets or are differently-abled experience corporal punishment differently. Children’s experiences of physical violence differ depending on the status and position accorded to them in the home and in the community, even though the figures may not be sufficient to corroborate this. Street children, for instance, usually have no experience of corporal punishment in schools and in the home since most have already quit school or rarely pursue their education. All of them lack a decent shelter to go to, at least temporarily. As a result, most of the street children who participated in the focus group discussions talked about physical violence they experienced on the street. The table below shows why street children are apparently more susceptible to violence outside the home and school environments, even though the figures also contain experiences they might have encountered at home and in school before joining the street. In some areas with child protection units, street children indicated that there had been some improvement in the behaviour of police officers (who are among the major perpetrators of physical violence).

*“The police beat us after tying our hands together.” 12-year-old street child*

*“People yell at us saying that we are behaving badly after eating leftovers.” Street child*

By contrast, the likelihood of children who are differently-abled experiencing physical punishment is minimal as compared to other groups of children. The reason is basically the sympathy shown to them by members of the community due to their physical condition. Yet there are reports of incidents of physical abuse in the home, at school and in local neighbourhoods. On the other hand, these children are more usually subjected to psychological punishments.

Table 5.8 Corporal punishment in the community at large: comparison between school and street children

Type of punishment	Street children	School children
Hitting with a stick	67.1%	47.0%
Whipping with a belt	48.6%	34.4%
Slapping	71.7%	52.0%
Kicking	72.4%	50.8%
Hitting the head	78.2%	51.3%
Pinching	68.0%	47.1%

Children aged 16-18 experience more violence. Based on the feedback obtained through questionnaires administered on children, children aged 16 to 18 reported more physical violence than those in the age ranges 4 to 9 and 10 to 15. According to these figures, children aged between 4 and 9 are the least abused. The only physical abuse these children experience more frequently than the other groups is kneeling down at school.

Male children have slightly more frequent experiences of physical abuse. Community members and other respondents reiterated that girls are treated less severely compared to boys when it comes to corporal punishment. Questionnaire data from children also confirms this general picture (see Table 5.9, next page). Respondents this was largely due to the fact that female children usually stay at home and more often show obedience towards parents. However, some incidents were mentioned at different study sites relating to girls suffering severe physical maltreatment particularly when reaching puberty, after which

their every move is construed in relation to “their effort to sneak out from home and have fun”.

Table 5.9 Responses of children who experienced of corporal punishment at home (by gender)

Type of punishment	Male	Female
Hitting with a stick	78.2%	62.9%
Whipping with a belt	66.5%	60.8%
Slapping	72.8%	67.5%
Kicking	57.4%	48.5%
Hitting the head	78.0%	68.4%
Pinching	72.4%	65.6%

When children are physically punished it is not important that they agree they have done wrong. Children related quite a number of incidents in which they were subjected to severe beatings and other types of cruel punishments for reasons they, or a third person, did not fully exactly understand.

*“I went with my younger sister one Sunday to attend mass in one of the Protestant churches in our neighbourhood. I was excited to tell the story when my mother tied the two of us in a room, burned pepper and locked the door. It was only lately that I learned the wrong we committed, which was going to a church we do not belong to.” 16-year-old girl*

*“I remember one day my uncle waking me up early in the morning. Then he started to severely beating me with his belt. I didn’t know what I’d done wrong. I will not forget that particular incident for the rest of my life.” Sixth-grade student*

Street children, in particular, emerged as frequent recipients of such misfortunes at the study sites. Whenever theft is reported in a locality where street children have settled, it is common for them to be rounded up and incarcerated by the police. In most cases, they are beaten until the stolen or lost object is found. Grown up girls of 14 to 18 years old may suffer continual harassment, abuse and tight monitoring of their movements by parents or by other members of the family on the pretext of protecting them from sexual violence and fraud. A girl at one of the study sites, for instance, always misses her last class at school to arrive home early to avoid being beaten by her family. A few minutes’ lateness is considered by her parents as indiscipline: she was somewhere other than she should have been.

Domestic workers are more vulnerable. Children in this category are extremely vulnerable to physical punishment. They usually come from remote rural areas, leaving them with no choice but to tolerate any violence exercised against them by their employers. Children told the following stories.

*“One Tuesday afternoon, a girl (our neighbour) from a rural area was busy doing domestic work. But she could not finish all she had been told to do. She explained to the lady that she had worked a lot and felt rather tired. The lady screamed at her that she was not feeding her only to sit idle. Then she tied her hands and legs together with a rope. As if this was not enough, she forced her to inhale smoke of burning pepper. After that day the girl felt very sick. When the lady doubted her recovery, she sent her back to the place she had come from.” Eighth-grade student*

*“A girl [domestic worker] was preparing butter. When she had finished, she put it somewhere in the corner. For some reason the butter spilled over. Then the indignant lady beat her with a steel*

rod used for grinding coffee. The child's spine was broken and she became terminally handicapped." Seventh-grade student.

## 5.2. Psychological violence

### 5.2.1 Type, prevalence and magnitude of psychological punishment in the home

#### Overview of the findings

Family members commonly subject children to psychological punishment. It is more prevalent compared to physical punishment.

*"I hate insults more than beatings. My brother is always angry with me and calls me a prostitute. He shouts at me every time because I play and joke with boys. He does not understand that this would never help me. One day he came to me and said that he has heard that I have an intimate [sexual] relationship with some of the boys. And without any evidence, he began to beat me severely. So severely that I was not able to control myself and my urine was all over my body. I never forget that incident for the rest of my life." 16-year-old girl*

Psychological punishments like insults, shouting and making threats are common in all study sites. Community members and parents noted that no child has grown up without experiencing such maltreatment. Children said the practice was so common that it could appear to be the prerogative of every adult who had any kind of relationship with children. Discussions with community members also revealed that participants seldom mentioned psychological punishment when defining violence. They would begin to talk about it only after research team members drew their attention to it.

Community leaders, parents and teachers consider psychological punishment less harmful to children. Nevertheless, in the opinion/view of many children, psychological punishments such as insults and ridicule are as damaging as the physical ones. Some children even seem to prefer physical punishment if forced to choose.

Shouting/glaring, insults and threats are the commonest forms of psychological punishment. Children's responses confirmed they had experienced all psychological punishments listed, with the commonest being shouting/glaring (71.8%), insults (76.7%), and causing fright/making threats (65.5%). See Table 5.10, below. The questionnaire completed by community leaders, parents and teachers also confirmed the children's responses. Hence, 84.7%, 77.4%, 74.5% and 70% of the respondents said that children had experienced the respective types of punishment (see Table 5.11, Chapter 5 annex).

Table 5.10 Responses of children on their experiences of psychological punishment in the home

	Type of punishment	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1	Shouting/glaring	23.2%	48.6%	28.1%
2	Insults	27.0%	49.7%	23.3%
3	Causing fright/making threats	16.1%	39.2%	44.5%
4	Ridicule and inflicting embarrassment	13.7%	24.3%	62.0%
5	Isolation	10.9%	24.0%	65.1%



### 5.2.2 Type, prevalence and magnitude of psychological punishment in schools

Children are exposed to various types of psychological punishments at school.

*“In our school, insulting schoolchildren is common...”14-year-old girl*

Most community leaders and children who participated in the focus group discussion agreed that psychological punishment was still exercised in schools. The questionnaires filled in by children provide clear evidence of this. While many say corporal punishment in schools is in steady decline, there seems to be no change as far as psychological violence is concerned. Some respondents, particularly children, even noted that teachers were deploying psychological punishment more vigorously as a result of the official ban on corporal punishment. Meanwhile, teachers and school authorities at many study sites argue that psychological punishments are non-existent in schools or are decreasing.

Shouting/glaring, insults, threats, ridicule and inflicting embarrassment, suspension from class and forced written repetition of words/sentences are relatively more frequent. Children’s responses illustrate that they are subjected to all kinds of psychological punishment in schools. The commonest are shouting/glaring (61.1%), insults (70.3%), causing fright/making threats (54.3%), ridicule and inflicting embarrassment (46.6%), suspension from class (46.6%), and forced written repetition of words or sentences (45.0), see Table 5.12, below. Community leaders, parents, and teachers also seem to agree with the children and 70.4%, 73.3%, 66.3%, 59.7% of them said that children had experienced the respective types of punishment (see Table 5.13, Chapter 5 annex). One female student said her eighth and ninth grade teacher used to utter bad and discouraging words to her on a regular basis. She said that when she went to the school library to study he used to discourage her by saying she was there only to pass the time. She added that she even wanted to discontinue her education because of his ceaseless nagging and abuse, and that the teacher’s behaviour had left her with a very negative attitude towards teachers.

Table 5.12 Responses of children on their experiences of psychological punishment in schools

	<b>Type of punishment</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>
1	Shouting/glaring	14.2%	46.8%	38.9%
2	Insults	20.9%	49.4%	29.7%
3	Causing fright/making threats	11.3%	43.0%	45.7%
4	Ridicule and inflicting embarrassment	12.0%	34.5%	53.4%
5	Isolation	7.6%	25.9%	66.5%
6	Suspension from class	11.4%	34.5%	54.0%
7	Denial of being outside at break time	10.9%	29.6%	59.5%

### 5.2.3 Type, prevalence and magnitude of psychological punishment in the community

All types of psychological violence are inflicted on children in the community but their magnitude and prevalence is much lower than in the home and in schools. Respondents, particularly community leaders and parents, said children rarely suffer psychological abuse by members of the community, though except certain groups such as street children and

girls are exceptions to this rule. They said neighbours and community member do not punish children as used to be the case in the past. Indeed, the phenomenon has almost vanished in bigger towns. Some parents expressed regret that the days are gone when children respected adults.

Psychological punishment is less frequent in the community. Even though respondents note that there is less violence outside the home and school compounds, psychological punishment is prevalent in the community. The commonest forms reported by children are shouting and glaring (47.6 percent), insults (64.9 percent), causing fright/making threats (57.2 percent), and ridicule and inflicting embarrassment (42.8 percent), see Table 5.14, below. The corresponding figures given by community leaders, teachers and parents for the proportion of children who suffer such abuse in the community was 51.2 percent, 60.3 percent, 52.6 percent and 46.6 percent respectively, see Table 5.15, Chapter 5 annex.

*“When we go out shopping, boys always threaten, insult and harass us”. 15-year-old girl*

Table 5.14 Responses of children on their experiences of psychological punishment in the community

	Type of punishment	Usually	Sometimes	Never
1	Shouting/glaring	13.2%	34.4%	52.4%
2	Insults	20.8%	44.1%	35.1%
3	Causing fright/making threats	17.4%	39.8%	43.8%
4	Ridicule and causing embarrassment	12.7%	30.1%	57.2%

#### 5.2.4 Variation in the prevalence and magnitude of psychological punishment

Addis Ababa shows a lower prevalence of psychological punishment. According to the responses given by children, psychological violence is relatively less prevalent in Addis Ababa than in other regions. For comparison purposes, see the table below in relation to the most frequent psychological punishments in the home.

Table 5.16 Psychological punishment in the home, by region

Type of punishment	Addis Ababa	Oromia	Amhara	Tigray	SNNPR
Shouting/glaring	60.8%	72.5%	78.3%	72.3%	76.8%
Insults	52.2%	80.8%	84.1%	77.6%	85.0%
Causing fright/making threats	36.5%	59.0%	62.0%	64.6%	57.3%

Variations among groups of children. With regard to the most prevalent forms of psychological punishment indicated above, students experience more abuse than orphans, children with disabilities, and children at home care centres. However, street children experience a higher rate of violence in other places compared to other groups, including school children. (See Table 5.17, below.)

Table 5.17 Psychological punishment in the community by children group

Type of punishment	Students	Street children
Shouting/glaring	48.5%	58.9%
Insults	64.1%	76.0%
Causing fright/making threats	57.0%	67.1%
Ridicule and inflicting embarrassment	43.9%	50.7%

Boys experience more psychological punishment than girls. As with corporal punishment, boys experience psychological punishment more frequently than girls. This is probably because girls are usually occupied with household chores and hence are less visible and have less social interaction within the home as well as outside it. Even though most girls are not allowed to go out and play in the same way as their brothers, they accept it as a normal way of life. However, a significant number of girls in the study sites noted during the focus group discussions that keeping girls at home to do housework while allowing the boys to play outside amounts to discrimination and, in their opinion, could be construed as a form of psychological violence against girls.

Children between the age of 16-18 experience more psychological punishment than other age groups. Based on the questionnaire responses from children, those aged 16-18 are exposed to psychological punishment more frequently than those aged 4-9 and 10-15. The data revealed that those aged 4-9 suffered least abuse. Indeed, the only psychological abuse experienced more frequently by children aged 4-9 than those of other age groups was insults at home, in school and in the community.

## 6. Perpetrators of physical and humiliating punishment against children

The study identified different groups of individuals which inflict violence against children. The identities of these groups may depend on the status of children in the community as well as their relationships with the groups. As a result, perpetrators of physical and humiliating punishment against children may differ if the child is a girl or boy, if he or she lives in a rural or urban area, or if he or she lives on the street or not, and so on. The relevant information was collected primarily from focus group discussions and interviews with and statements by children.

### 6.1. Perpetrators of physical and humiliating punishment

#### *In the home – fathers, mothers, older sisters and brothers, stepmothers and fathers*

As explained in the previous section, the study revealed physical and humiliating punishment to be prevalent in the home in all study sites. Parents stand out as the principal perpetrators of such violence. During the focus group discussions, a considerable number of children noted that fathers, in particular, play a primary role in this regard as they are responsible for disciplining their children in the Ethiopian socio-cultural context. The intensity of violence inflicted on children, whether physical or psychological, also differs between mothers and fathers. Since mothers work most of the time in the house, they get to spend more time with their children than fathers and clearly abuse children more frequently than fathers. Nevertheless, children regard the punishments administered by mothers as milder compared to that administered by fathers, although the very unpleasant practice of forcing children to inhale the smoke of burning chili peppers is more frequently used by mothers in some places.

Children who have older brothers revealed that they suffer physical and humiliating abuse from them. These children are even more respectful, and submissive, towards their older brothers and sisters than their parents.

It was also noted that children who live with stepfathers or stepmothers suffer more than their peers, with some reporting severe beatings or psychological duress at the hands of their stepparents. One girl said she would rather miss her last lesson at school every day than suffer the worst from her stepmother.

Responses from children who participated in the study indicated that the children who suffered most – physically and psychologically – were those from extended families or distant relatives.

#### *At school – teachers, guards, class monitors and boys*

Many respondents, including children, agreed that teachers had reduced their tendency to inflict physical and humiliating abuse on children. Nevertheless, physical and humiliating punishment is still being exercised by teachers in schools, as shown in the previous chapter.

Almost every school operates a system of class monitors for each classroom. A good proportion of students who participated in the focus group discussions stressed that class monitors commit physical and humiliating abuse against students. Students further expressed their concern that monitors use their positions to take revenge on students who report them to teachers.

Guards are the other group that physically and psychologically punishes children. There are plenty of occasions when security guards come into contact with students, particularly before the commencement of sessions and whenever a child is not behaving according to the school norms outside the classroom.

*“One day, I was a little bit late for school. I was running fast to arrive in time. When I arrived at the gate of our school, I tried to sneak in. But the guard came from nowhere and severely beat me on my back by a big stick. I fell down. I fully recovered only after visiting some doctors.”*  
Seventh-grade student

*“I have been punished by a teacher by pressing a pen between my fingers.”* 13-year-old

### ***In the community – vagrant boys, police, and street children***

In towns, girls frequently experience beatings, insults and various forms of harassment from boys in the neighbourhood. Younger boys are sometimes physically abused and bullied if they don't comply with instructions given by older boys.

The police also perpetrate physical violence on children, for a variety of reasons. They frequently abuse children who sell items on the street and may carry out mass arrests of street children if a theft is reported in the locality. Children sometimes suffer police beatings on account of their mere presence, and local militia are reported to mete out similar treatment in semi-urban and rural settings. As a result, many street children said they were living under a continuous threat and fear of the police. Older street boys also frequently abuse street children if the latter fail to comply with street norms.

*“I was beaten by the police for begging.”* Street child

*“I was beaten by the police for sleeping on the sidewalks.”* Street child

## 7. Causes and effects of physical and humiliating punishment against children

### 7.1. Causes of physical and humiliating punishment

#### *Culture and attitude*

In the majority of Ethiopian communities, children are generally viewed as parental property. Parents usually seem to have every right to do what ever they like with their children and the prevailing attitudes in society mean that abusive parents are not scrutinised by society or the government. In other words, children are not treated as human beings born and endowed with their own particular interests as well as the capacity to make decisions for themselves. The low status accorded to children and a lack of awareness about alternative forms of discipline were frequently cited by children and adults as the major cause of continued use of corporal and other forms of punishments against children.

#### *Lack of awareness about alternative forms of discipline*

As has been mentioned, individuals may inflict corporal and psychological punishment on children out of ignorance because they themselves have grown up experiencing or witnessing such punishments in the family and in the community. No alternative method of discipline has been practiced or internalised by members of the community. Even in schools where corporal punishment is officially prohibited, teachers are not conversant with alternative modes of maintaining discipline.

#### *Large family sizes and numbers of children per class*

The average family size in many Ethiopian communities is relatively large. Apart from the problems this creates in feeding children, it also has an impact on the way children are brought up since serious attention and time cannot be devoted to the needs, interests and performance of all children. The problem of size is also reflected in classroom situations in schools, where teachers cannot properly follow up the progress and development of every student – a problem exacerbated by a lack of counselling services.

#### *Poverty and unemployment*

Spreading alternative modes of discipline usually requires resources. The poor economic status of individuals and the government is hampering the spread of alternative discipline forms, which creates fertile ground for corporal punishment. Poverty is also organically linked to unemployment. Vagrants who physically abuse girls and boys in the community are allowed to persist on the grounds that they have no jobs to occupy their minds. As a result, their major preoccupation becomes loafing around and abusing children. About 63% of students and 76% of community members (parents, teachers and community leaders) cite unemployment as a cause of physical and humiliating violence.

#### *Problems related to enforcing relevant legislation*

The review of relevant legislation in Ethiopia suggests that the existing legal framework provides, with some exceptions, acceptable protection with regard to physical and humiliating violence against children. The national constitution, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the national Penal Code clearly prohibit corporal punishment, excluding minor punishments by parents. However, physical and humiliating violence committed against children is apparently not scrutinised by the legal system. In particular,

the study discovered that corporal punishment exercised against children, particularly by parents, is either unreported or inadequately prosecuted.

### **Alcoholism**

The focus group discussions held with children and other respondents, and the stories related by children, revealed that many experience violence in the form of bad behaviour by their parents. Many children and parents said children were frequently affected by drunken parents.

## **7.2. Effects of physical and humiliating punishment**

### ***Bodily injury and death***

A natural consequence of corporal punishment is that it may leave behind temporary or permanent injuries. In some extreme cases it may even result in death. Incidents have been recorded of children losing consciousness, being left bleeding and sustaining a broken back, loss of a limb or fingers, and other injuries as a result of physical abuse. Focus group participants cited real cases involving grave physical and humiliating punishment of children resulting in deaths and permanent injuries. In the Amhara region, 1,386 cases involving permanent and temporary bodily injury to children were reported to the police in 1995 (EC) and 1,252 cases in 1996. In the same two years there were 66 and 138 cases respectively involving deaths.

*“In my neighbourhood, I know a lady who is living with her niece. He tends the cattle and does all domestic work. But this boy has the habit of stealing food in the house. One day the lady tied his hands and put them on fire. Her recovered after lengthy treatment, but he lost his fingers.”*  
Ninth-grade student

*“In our classroom there was an intelligent girl. Our teacher likes her very much. Our class monitor was not happy with this and was rather jealous. Then he gave her name to the school authorities saying she was behaving badly in class. Later on the accusation by the class monitor was found to have been baseless and then, when she was going home after school, he punched her in the face. As a result two of her teeth were broken.”* 13-year-old

### **Emotional effect**

Physical and humiliating punishment is usually associated with unhappiness, humiliation, low self-esteem, sadness, shame, feelings of hopelessness, depression, anxiety, anger and vindictiveness.<sup>5</sup> Violence also undermines health by increasing self-destructive behaviour, such as smoking and substance abuse.<sup>6</sup> Respondents noted that children who experience physical and humiliating punishments suffer impairment to their mental and emotional development, even if they survive without visible physical injuries. They noted that such children will lack confidence in life and may develop similar abusive tendencies towards children when they get the chance.

*“I feel very scared and depressed as the persons with whom I live always beat me. I also feel jealous and I always cry when other kids in the neighbourhood play and enjoy themselves.”* 12-year-old girl

### **Streetism and prostitution**

When physical punishment becomes intolerable to a child, it may lead the child to run away from home. Discussions with street children indicate that quite a number of them

joined the street due to experiences of physical and humiliating violence at home. Other studies also confirm this assertion. For instance, a study of street children in four major towns in Ethiopia found family conflict to be the second largest reason for streetism, being cited in 11.3% of cases.<sup>7</sup> Girls often become prostitutes when they run away from home.

### ***School dropout***

Physical and humiliating punishment in schools is usually implicated in school dropout. Although accurate figures are lacking, Ethiopian education bureau officials identified corporal punishment as one of the reasons for school dropout. In focus group discussions, children also confirmed this and told a number of stories to this effect.

### ***Lack of interest and low retention and achievement rates in schools***

Physical abuse may also have a damaging effect on a child's motivation, interest and ability to learn and grow.<sup>8</sup> Respondent children related stories about children who live in bad and abusive situations and whose performance in school deteriorated.

### ***Long-term effect on the nation***

The combined effect of every act of violence may lead to the continuance of a society with emotionally weak and physically affected members. The significant number of minors who become street children and prostitutes is another impact that is felt at national level, as are higher numbers of low achievers in schools and throughout life.

Studies also indicate that children who have experienced physical violence in their early years are often violent when they become adults, thus perpetuating a cycle of violence in the family as well as in society at large.<sup>9</sup> Violence will always be used to end conflicts, to the ultimate detriment of the country as a whole. Focus group participants shared a common view that physical and humiliating punishment would create people with weak levels of personal development. They concurred with the statement that such a state of affairs would undermine the nation's ability to cope with a range of societal problems.

## 8. Programme interventions

Significant programme interventions are being carried out by governmental and non-governmental organisations to address the problem of physical and humiliating punishment of children. Most of the activities target schools. The programme interventions include awareness raising, conducting research and surveys, initiating and supporting clubs in schools, advocacy and lobbying, and providing support to victims of corporal punishment. It is not the intention of this study to provide a complete inventory of all the programmes and activities being carried out by different actors in Ethiopia. However, major interventions and actors in the area are highlighted in this chapter, along with limitations and areas of omission. Relevant information on programme interventions by various child-focused institutions was collected through self-administered questionnaires and interviews and from secondary sources.

### 8.1. Awareness raising

Substantial efforts are underway in Ethiopia as part of promoting the Convention on the Rights of the Child to change the deep-rooted practice of physically and psychologically punishing children. Accordingly, a number of child-focused institutions have begun efforts to raise awareness within the community, including among parents, teachers, children themselves and others. In particular, most education bureaux and BOLSAs, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations, are working to abolish corporal punishment in schools by raising awareness, particularly among teachers.

It was apparent from the focus group discussions that most teachers are aware of the shortcomings attached to corporal punishment as a means of disciplining children and its negative consequences on children and society. This awareness probably stems largely from the above interventions. However, it remains clear that most teachers and parents find it difficult to detach themselves from the old belief in the importance of corporal punishment and display a lack of commitment to and confidence in the alternatives. Education bureau experts also confirmed this suggestion, saying that teachers' primary doubts centre on the alternatives to corporal punishment. It is therefore important that future awareness-raising programmes for adults focus on alternatives to corporal punishment and on helping adults to abandon whatever lingering value they attach to it.

### 8.2. Conducting researches and surveys

The design and implementation of appropriate and effective policy and intervention programmes to address the problem of physical and humiliating punishment requires data and information on the nature, type, prevalence, magnitude, causes and effects of the problem. However, there is a dire shortage of data and research outputs in the area. Several NGOs, such as Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children Norway, ANPPCAN-Ethiopia and Forum on Street Children Ethiopia, have been attempting to fill this gap by conducting limited studies on corporal punishment, mainly in a school setting.

### 8.3. Promoting child participation through initiating and supporting clubs in schools

In order to promote child participation and to enable children to protect their own rights, some NGOs have helped establish and support child rights clubs, girls' clubs, media clubs and the like in schools. ANPPCAN-Ethiopia is one NGO that is actively engaged in this programme and has so far has facilitated the establishment of child rights clubs in more than 200 schools. With technical and material support, these clubs promote child

participation and child rights in their schools and community. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the majority of schools in the country lack such clubs.

#### **8.4. Protection programmes**

Protecting citizens from violence is the primary responsibility of the police and other law enforcement organisations. However, the participation and cooperation of community members and concerned institutions are required for law enforcement bodies to provide adequate protection to individuals. This is especially so in sensitive and delicate cases like violence against children, which normally need to be handled through special procedures and methods. There are limited intervention programmes in this regard. The establishment of child protection units in police stations in some major towns is a case in point. The units have been established in collaboration with the police and NGOs such as FSCE and Save the Children Sweden and aim to better protect children from violence, including corporal punishment, by dealing with cases of violence against children in a special and efficient manner.

Despite the various efforts to encourage reporting of child violence, a great proportion of cases remain unreported. Thus there is a need for extensive intervention in this area.

#### **8.5. Providing support to victims of violence**

More often than not, violence against children results in physical or emotional injury or both. It is necessary to minimise the traumatic effects of violence on children's lives and to help victims to reintegrate into society. MOLSA, together with other organisations such as UNICEF, Italian Cooperation, Save the Children Sweden and others, runs rehabilitation programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances, while other NGOs like ANPPCAN-Ethiopia, Save the Children Norway, FSCE, CHADET and others have support programmes for vulnerable children in general and victims of child violence in particular. Some of these organisations run drop-in centres for child victims of violence, including corporal punishment. The support and services provided include counselling, legal aid, medical services, education and training, and temporary shelter.

Rehabilitating and reintegrating victims of violence requires considerable resources. The support currently provided is insignificant compared to the scale of the problem. Thus there is a glaring mismatch between the child victims of violence needing support and the actual support available and, therefore, an urgent need to increase the amount and quality of support for victims. Particular attention needs to be paid to strengthening counselling services in schools.

## 9. Good practices

### Child clubs in schools

Significant numbers of child rights clubs and other kinds of clubs have been set up in schools around the country. Child rights clubs, with the support of some NGOs and school administrations, are engaged in various activities towards minimising and ultimately abolishing physical and humiliating punishment in schools as well as other places. Activities include raising awareness within the school community, advising and counselling fellow students, holding discussions with abusive parents on behalf of abused children and receiving complaints of abuse. Apart from promoting child participation and empowerment, the clubs help to minimise corporal and other forms of punishment in schools. Some studies indicate that differences exist between schools with and without child rights clubs with regard to the prevalence of punishment. In most schools where child rights clubs are operational, a significant decrease in corporal punishment has been observed in the last few years. What is not clear is to what extent this change is attributable to the child rights clubs since some people ascribe it to the new ministry of education regulation prohibiting corporal punishment. At any rate, setting up child rights clubs is a good practice when it comes to addressing the problem of physical and humiliating punishments and the idea should be adopted widely.

### Welcome ceremony to a newborn child by child rights clubs in Gonder

School child rights clubs in Gonder town and its environs are among those that are active in Ethiopia. Assisted by ANPPCAN-Ethiopia and Save the Children Norway, the clubs' activities include organising a welcome ceremony for each newborn child in their community. When a new child is born in the community, members of the child rights clubs go to the house and organise an event to celebrate the birth. During the welcome ceremony, the students educate the parents and neighbours about the rights of the child, focusing on the right to be free from physical and humiliating punishment and the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices. Even though it is difficult to measure the impact of this programme in terms of reducing physical and humiliating punishment of children in the area, the innovative approach deserves to be regarded as a good practice. Apart from helping to tackle physical and humiliating punishment of children, the programme is useful in empowering children by promoting their participation in the community and building their self-confidence and sense of social responsibility.

### Digum Elementary School

Digum Elementary School is situated off the road to Hawzen in Tigray Regional State. Three years ago the school was experiencing acute disciplinary problems among its students, which even involved teachers being attacked and beaten. In a bid to find a solution, the school administration brought teachers and students together, a gathering that resulted in the school community agreeing that students could participate in enforcing discipline. Since then, the students themselves enforce discipline among their schoolmates without any problem. The school has done away with corporal and other punishments and has not faced any significant difficulties. Even in the absence of fencing around the school premises, students do not leave without permission. Tigray Bureau of Education considers the school as an example for how the teaching-learning process can proceed in harmony. (Source: Head, Tigray Education Bureau.)

## Corporal punishment and the Swedish experience

Sweden is one of the few countries in the world that has succeeded in controlling the problem of physical punishment of children. In 1979, the International Year of the Child, Sweden became the first nation in the world to ban all forms of physical punishment, including the punishment of children in the home. The enactment of anti-spanking legislation was a landmark in the abolition of corporal punishment in Sweden. However, the legislation in itself was not sufficient to control corporal punishment; other associated measures have also played a significant role.

These measures include a major publicity campaign to inform the public about the new legislation. The ministry of justice distributed pamphlets to all households in Sweden in what was the biggest personal information campaign the country had seen. A second measure involved surveys on how the legislation was implemented and Statistics Sweden, the state statistics agency, was given the task of examining the experiences of and attitudes to punishment among children and adults, as well as evaluating children's knowledge of the new legislation. The third important measure towards ensuring successful implementation of the legislation was strengthening the reporting mechanisms for child abuse cases. In Sweden, people who come into contact with children as part of their work are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse to social services, while members of the public are encouraged to do so.

The importance of legal reform in addressing the problem of corporal punishment is one of the lessons that can be drawn from the Swedish experience. Aside from providing a normative framework of legally enforceable obligations, legal reform can promote social reform by changing public attitudes. The other important lesson is that for legal reform to bring about the desired changes, it should be accompanied by measures that facilitate its implementation.

## **10. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the authors recommend adoption of the following measures to address the problem of violence against children.

### **Awareness creation**

Taking in to account the prevalence of physical and humiliating punishment, the existing interventions aimed at awareness creation are not comprehensive and effective enough to address the problem of violence. Since violence is strongly rooted in culture and tradition, the necessary change may not materialise with the simple introduction of the rights of children in the community. Efforts need to go beyond this. What is needed, in particular, is education that is empowering and leads to real change from within (not a superficial transformation, as shown by some schoolteachers). Naturally, such interventions may call for sustainable intervention. Such intervention should be sufficiently comprehensive to cover rural areas effectively and according to local conditions. It should target children as well as other relevant actors that may exert influence, such as teachers, parents, opinion formers and community and traditional leaders.

### **Effective enforcement of existing laws**

Current legislation largely addresses physical and humiliating punishment of children and the prevalence of the problem is acknowledged by law enforcement bodies and the judiciary. Yet very few alleged perpetrators are brought to justice. The major issue relates to the judicial system, which is unable to cope with the problem despite all government bodies, the judiciary and executive having a mandatory obligation to enforce the law effectively. It is clear that these bodies are not discharging this obligation effectively as far as violence against children is concerned due to a lack of commitment and attitudinal problems. The government should there demonstrate a real commitment, for instance by involving other participants and by working with other interventions, and assign the human and financial resources needed to meet its obligation to end violence against children.

### **Establishing mechanisms for effective reporting of violence**

As part of efforts to enforce the legislation that protects children, practical work needs to be undertaken to increase the reporting of violent acts against children. Many such crimes are not reported due to prevailing cultural and attitudinal problems. Victims and their fellow community members usually do not report corporal punishment administered by parents, no matter how severe. The reporting issue will gradually be addressed by other interventions such as effective awareness raising strategies about the rights of children. Nevertheless, creative mechanisms such as making it mandatory to report violent acts against children might have an immediate impact.

### **Regular and systematic data collection and analysis**

There is lack of comprehensive, available data on violence against children that can serve as the basis for future interventions. It is important, therefore, that data on the extent and forms of physical and humiliating violence perpetrated against children are systematically collected and analysed. Such information might be able to serve as a baseline from which to tailor and successfully implement intervention strategies. It is recommended that child participation and participatory research methods are used in this context.

## Providing support to victims

At present, few interventions are in progress to help the victims of physical and humiliating violence. Many children have joined the street and become prostitutes, while many are emotionally distressed as a result of abuse. Extending meaningful support to such children by rehabilitating them from the trauma they have experienced and integrating them into the society is part of addressing the problem of punishment against children. It is therefore important that practical efforts are carried out in schools and at the community level to help victims of physical and humiliating punishment.

## Enhancing child participation

The Convention on the Rights of the Child puts a special focus on child participation. Participation is highly relevant since it enables children to claim and fight for their rights. Interventions that exclude the participation of children are unlikely to succeed. At present, children in Ethiopia are relegated to a low position in society and have little say in issues affecting their lives. Unless the status quo is broken, problems affecting children may not be effectively addressed. Practical activities must therefore be designed to enhance the participation of children at all levels. Effective, systematic and sustainable mechanisms need to be established in this context.

## Legal reform

As mentioned earlier, addressing the problem of physical and humiliating punishment of children in Ethiopia as it stands is more an issue of enforcing existing laws than anything else. However, the clear incompatibility between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1957 Penal Code, the Revised Draft Penal Code, the Revised Family Law and the Civil Code should not be overlooked. Legalisation of corporal punishment by subsidiary legislation, coupled with the attitudes prevalent in Ethiopian society regarding corporal punishment, may have a damaging effect on victims and potential abusers alike. On the other hand, defining the extent of the punishment to be administered according to the law may not be easy and this might work to the detriment of the child for various reasons. At any rate, the Ethiopian government needs to meet its clear obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to take legislative steps to ensure the provisions of the convention become reality. Intervention initiatives should therefore be undertaken aimed at securing legislative reforms to strengthen the rights and interests of children.

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<sup>1</sup> K. Porteus & et al., *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: Growing discipline and respect in our classrooms* (Heinemann Publishers, 2001) at 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> G. Clapp, "Child Abuse", in Clapp G., *Child Study Research: Current Perspectives and Applications* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1998) 143.

<sup>4</sup> Vagrants are boys who loaf around in the streets for most of the time. A vagrant boy might be any boy who lives on the street, whether or not he has a family or attends school.

<sup>5</sup> Save the Children, *Corporal/Physical and Psychological Punishment of Girls and Boys in South and Central Asia Region*, pp 25, 2004

<sup>6</sup> Lori Heise, Mary Ellsberg, Megan Gottemoeller, "Ending Violence against Women," Population Reports, Series L, no. 11. Baltimore: John Hopkins University School of Public Health, Population Information Programme, December 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, UNICEF Ethiopia, University College, Cork, Ireland, *Study on Street Children in Four Selected Towns of Ethiopia, Forum on Street Children Ethiopia*, December 1992

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*Proceedings of Training on the Concept of the Effects of Corporal Punishment in Addis Ketema Comprehensive Secondary School, 15-16 , Central Shoa Hotel , Dec, 2003*

<sup>8</sup> Save the Children, Corporal/Physical and Psychological Punishment of Girls and Boys in South and Central Asia Region, pp26, 2004

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp26, 2004

## Save the Children Sweden in Eastern and Central Africa

Save the Children Sweden started working in Eastern and Central Africa in 1965. Today, the organisation has offices in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Nairobi, Kenya; and Khartoum, Sudan. Save the Children Sweden has long-term child-rights based development programmes in Ethiopia and Sudan, and it supports local partners in Kenya, Eritrea, Somaliland and Uganda.

The organisation focuses on building the capacity of local people, community-based structures and organisations. In Eastern and Central Africa, it works with more than forty different non-governmental organisations and government bodies. In addition, it has adopted a direct implementation approach in southern Sudan and in the refugee camps of western Ethiopia and North Darfur.

All of the work in the region focuses on children's rights, and tackles issues that affect marginalised children. The core of the work focuses on children affected by conflict, discrimination, abuse, exploitation, and HIV/AIDS. Save the Children Sweden's focus also includes education, child participation and good governance in the best interest of the child.

The major task facing child rights advocates today is making the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality for all children. The exchange of experience and know-how are proactive ways to work towards this goal, which is why Save the Children Sweden makes its books and reports available for the world. Welcome to visit our child rights bookshop on the internet, [www.rb.se/bookshop](http://www.rb.se/bookshop)

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Save the Children Sweden fights for children's rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

Save the Children Sweden works for a world:

- which respects and values each child
- which listens to children and learns
- where all children have hope and opportunity

More information about Save the Children Sweden and our projects worldwide can be obtained from our head office.

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